The future of organizational trust research: A content-analysis and synthesis of future research directions

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THE FUTURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST RESEARCH: A CONTENT-ANALYTIC SYNTHESIS OF SCHOLARLY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This chapter contributes to defining a common research agenda on organizational trust, first by content-analyzing scholarly recommendations for future research published between 2007 and 2011 across 347 articles and 58 social science journals, and second by reviewing the latest developments in trust research published between 2012 and 2015 across 111 articles and 31 top-tier management journals. Our content analysis of scholarly recommendations yields an emergent organizing framework that offers systematic insight into the trust community's beliefs about how the field should move forward, while our review of the latest developments in the field provide insight into whether these recommendations have recently been followed up on, or whether research has developed in previously unanticipated directions. Our synthesis and review reveal a wealth of exciting research possibilities and offer a glimpse into the future of organizational trust research. We conclude with suggestions on how individual researchers and the trust community as a whole can use and build on our findings to help advance the field.

INTRODUCTION

"I am not interested in the past, I am interested in the future, for that is where I expect to spend the rest of my life."–Charles F. Kettering (1876-1958)

In organizational contexts, actors often face a social dilemma, in that they need to choose whether or not to cooperate with others, recognizing that doing so could be mutually beneficial, but also puts them at risk (Kong, Dirks, & Ferrin, 2014). In such social dilemma situations, trust serves as a key mechanism that helps organizational actors suspend these risks and vulnerabilities and proceed in cooperative manner. As such, it is not surprising that trust is one of the most frequently studied concepts in management research today and considered essential to the performance of individual employees (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007), teams (De Jong, Dirks, & Gillespie, forthcoming), and organizations (Cao & Lumineau, 2015). Organizational trust continues to be an enduring and vibrant area of research that spans scholarly disciplines (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998), levels of analysis (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012), theoretical lenses (Möllering, 2006), and methodological approaches (Lyon, Möllering, & Saunders, 2012). Scholarly interest in the topic is overwhelming and has produced a wealth of insights, in which organizational trust has been conceptualized and operationalized in a variety of different ways (McEvily, 2011; McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011), studied in numerous contexts (Saunders, Skinner, Dietz, Gillespie, & Lewicki, 2011), and linked to a multitude of antecedents and consequences (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

While this immense scholarly interest is encouraging, the field suffers from fragmentation and a lack of cumulative research. One of the reasons for this is the diversity in approaches to organizational trust research (Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2012). Differences between disciplinary backgrounds, research traditions, and levels of analysis tend to generate self-constructed silos of trust scholars (DeNisi, 2010) that evolve and co-exist in a disconnected manner. This issue is further compounded by the fact that management scholars often include trust as part of their investigations without treating it as a core variable of interest (De Jong et al., forthcoming). As a result, insights and future research suggestions provided by these studies may largely go unnoticed and fail to converge. Due to these two factors, a common research agenda is currently lacking and it remains unclear how the field of organizational trust research should move forward.

The current chapter aims to address this issue by examining scholarly recommendations for future research on organizational trust as well as reviewing the latest developments in the field. First, we offer bottom-up insights into what the field as a whole believes future research on organizational trust should look like by synthesizing scholarly recommendations for future research regarding: 1) the nature of trust itself; 2) its dynamics and relationships with antecedents and consequences; 3) the underlying causal mechanisms through which it operates; and 4) the contextual and level-of-analysis assumptions that bound the generalizability of these relationships. Hence, rather than providing research directions based on our personal opinion about what we think is the way forward, our review is data-driven and inductively derived based on recommendations provided by the (organizational) trust field. Second, building on this synthesis, we review the latest developments in organizational trust research, providing insights into: 1) issues that were recommended and are currently receiving considerable scholarly attention; 2) issues that were recommended but have not been (fully) addressed by scholars; and 3) new topics that were not anticipated by earlier scholarly recommendations. We conclude this chapter with reflections on how individual researchers and the trust community as a whole can build on our findings.

SCHOLARLY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In order to synthesize the field's recommendations for future research, we performed a content analysis of suggestions made by scholars in journal articles on trust and complemented these secondary data with a survey we administered to active trust scholars. Below, we first describe our research design and the content-analytic procedures we followed to code the scholarly recommendations. We then discuss the substantive themes that emerged from our analysis as well as the extent to which these themes were commonly recognized by scholars.

Methods

Sample and Data Collection

In identifying scholarly recommendations for future research on organizational trust, we relied on two complementary data sources. The first source comprised journal articles on trust that were published or in press between 2007 and 2011. We selected 2007 as the starting publication year since both an influential synthesis of prior research and a summary of future research directions on trust were published in that year (Colquitt et al., 2007; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). We chose 2011 as the final year to allow us to assess to what extent recent research has, in fact, followed up on these research directions (see the second part of this chapter). To identify relevant articles, we performed an online search using the ABI/INFORM and ProQuest search engines for papers containing the word "trust" in their titles and/or abstracts. Given our focus on organizational trust, we made sure to search through the major journals in management (e.g., *Academy of Management Journal*), but we also considered high-impact[1] journals in related fields – including (social) psychology (e.g., *Annual Review of Psychology*), sociology (e.g., *American Sociological Review*), economics (e.g., *American Economic Review*), and information systems (e.g., *MIS Quarterly*) – to expand the breadth of recommendations. This procedure yielded 347 articles published across 58 scholarly journals, including 28 management journals and 30 journals from related fields.

To counterbalance potential selective reporting of recommendations in articles (e.g., due to editor and reviewer influences) and increase the scope and variety of the recommendations, we also obtained primary survey data from active organizational trust scholars. Our survey was administered in 2011 to scholars who either (co-)authored one of the abovementioned articles, were involved in Academy of Management Annual Meeting sessions on trust between 2007 and 2011, or attended the 2010 EIASM Workshop on Trust Within and Between Organizations. The survey asked scholars to provide at least three substantive recommendations for future research on trust. We received useable responses from 162 scholars.

Data Analysis

We started our analysis by reading the articles' discussion and limitations sections as well as the responses to the survey in order to identify recommendations for trust research. We only identified a statement as a future research recommendation when it explicitly focused on trust (rather than on something else) and when the recommendation was substantive (rather than methodological) in nature. We then created a coding scheme that helped us to identify specific recommendations related to how the scholarly community viewed the ways to move trust research forward. Throughout our qualitative data analysis, we followed an iterative approach,

[1] Journals with an ISI impact factor greater than 1 were considered 'high-impact.' A comprehensive list of all the included journals and articles can be obtained from the first author.

moving back and forth between our data and existing theoretical frameworks (Duriau, Reger, & Pfaffer, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Following the tenets of the 'Gioia methodology' (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013), we began by identifying first-order codes illustrated with simple descriptive phrases or quotes. As multiple codes began to capture the views of multiple article recommendations/respondents on the same topic, we collapsed several codes into first-order concepts that represented the foundation of our emerging understanding of the recommendations for future organizational trust research. In classifying scholarly recommendations, we relied on existing frameworks from the organizational trust literature and the broader management literature whenever possible. Specifically, in coding recommendations about examining specific trustors and trustees, we applied Currall and Inkpen's (2006) framework, which identifies nine trustor-trustee relationships based on the respective level of analysis of the trustor and the trustee (i.e., individual, group, organizational level). In coding recommendations about antecedents and consequences of trust, we used Fulmer and Gelfand's (2012) framework, which organizes antecedents of trust into individual-level characteristics of the trustor and trustee, shared characteristics, organizational characteristics, and extra-organizational characteristics; and organizes consequences into attitudes and preferences, knowledge sharing and organizational learning, communication, cooperation, and conflicts, viability (commitment and turnover), and performance. In coding recommendations about studying trust dynamics, we drew on Rousseau et al.'s (1998) distinction between trust building, stability/maintenance, and dissolution/violation. Finally, in coding recommendations about boundary conditions, we used Whetten, Felin, and King's (2009) distinction between contextual and level-of-analysis boundary assumptions. Regarding contextual boundary assumptions, we drew on Whetten's (1989) notions of "who," “where,” and “when” to distinguish between assumptions about generalizability across parties, locations, and temporal phases.

After the initial first-order coding was complete, we searched for relationships between these concepts and began assembling related concepts into higher-order themes. For instance, the statement “*future research could allow the dimensions of trust and distrust to vary within a construct*” yielded two first-order codes: “definition of trust”, and “multiple dimensions: general.” Later, these two categories were subsumed under the second-order theme “nature and dimensions.” We also allowed recommendations to generate codes for different themes when appropriate. For example, the statement “*there are many unexplored research avenues in areas regarding the formation of trust, the appropriate aggregation of trust, and a deeper insight into the causal nexus through which trust acts*” yielded the code “trust level dynamics” as well as the codes “levels and referents” and “mediating mechanisms.”

After several iterations of this thematic organizing, we were able to collapse the second-order themes into overarching dimensions that captured classes of recommendations at a more aggregate level. In this process, the fundamental building blocks of a theory summarized by Whetten (1989) formed an important basis for our integrative framework; our analyses revealed what, how, why, and who/where/when as the main dimensions along which the second-order recommendations could be classified. “What” recommendations pertain to the nature and properties of the core construct under investigation – in our case, organizational trust. “How” recommendations pertain to the pattern, sequence, and form of the relationships between trust and other dependent and independent variables of interest (e.g., consequences and antecedents). “Why” recommendations pertain to assumptions about the underlying causal mechanisms that explain why trust is related to other variables. These assumptions and explanations are typically articulated in and supplied by foundational theories. Finally, "who/where/when" recommendations pertain to the articulation of the boundary conditions under which the predicted relationships are most and least likely to hold. These conditions limit the generalizability of the proposed relationships between trust and other variables.

Figure 1 and Table 1 present a comprehensive overview of the coding process as well as illustrative examples of emergent themes. We subsequently generated count data – that is, we quantified qualitative data based on the number of times a recommendation within a higher-order theme was made – to assess the extent to which themes were commonly recognized among scholars.

Insert Figure 1 and Table 1 around here

Results

Emerging Themes across "What" Recommendations

Our findings clearly suggest that scholars agree that more work needs to be done to improve construct clarity regarding trust. At the same time, scholars seem to disagree about how trust should be conceptualized; while some recommend conceptualizing trust as a (rational) decision or behavioral choice, others recommend conceptualizing it as an attitude or psychological state. Thus, our data suggest that the scholarly debate about the definition of trust is still ongoing and should be continued in the future. Indeed, the issue remains especially salient in the field of inter-organizational trust, where scholars debate about whether organizations are entities that are capable of experiencing trust psychologically or whether they can only choose to trust in a behavioral sense.

In addition to the need to clarify the overall trust construct, our findings suggest that scholars agree on the need to distinguish between different types and dimensions of trust. At the same time, we also observe scholarly disagreement about which dimensions need to be studied and how. First, scholarly recommendations differ regarding the dimensions or types of trust that need to be studied; some point towards focusing on cognitive versus affective dimensions of trust, while others suggest a focus on competence versus goodwill trust or institutional versus process-based trust. Second, while some scholarly recommendations suggest that dimensions or types of trust should be studied as discrete manifestations, others suggest that they should be studied in combination and/or as hybrid forms of trust.

A third theme that emerged from our data is the need for bi-lateral and multi-lateral approaches to studying trust that take multiple parties into account. This need manifests in recommendations to study a variety of conceptual extensions of trust. For instance, scholars recommend investigations into 'being trusted' and 'felt trust', pointing towards the need to assess trust not only from the trustor's but also from the trustee's perspective. Furthermore, recommendations to examine third-party trust and trust asymmetry imply the need to account for trust levels between two or more parties, thus shifting the focus towards bi-lateral and multi-lateral approaches. Finally, recommendations to study 'trust (in)accuracy' suggest the need to simultaneously consider both the trustor's perceptions about the trustee's trustworthiness and the trustee's actual trustworthiness. All of these recommendations consistently point to the need to move beyond the dominant uni-lateral approach in which trust is studied exclusively from the perspective of a single trustor.

Finally, organizing scholarly recommendations using Currall and Inkpen's (2006) level-of-analysis framework reveals important trends regarding the nature of the trustors and trustees that should be studied in the future. Although researchers suggest that more work is needed at all levels of analysis, they place a clear emphasis on moving beyond the individual level of analysis and study trust at aggregate levels, such as the team and organizational level. Second, scholars recommend that future studies should continue focusing on trustors and trustees at similar levels of analysis (i.e., interpersonal trust, inter-/intra-group and inter-organizational trust), as has been the dominant focus in the literature. Finally, relative to scholarly recommendations about trust in a single referent, only some scholars recognize the need to study trust in multiple referents at the same time.

Emerging Themes across "How" Recommendations

Our findings reveal a clear push towards examining the nomological network of trust – that is, the antecedents and consequences associated with trust. One trend we observe is a strong emphasis on examining consequences over antecedents of trust. Thus, it seems that scholars feel that more work is needed to demonstrate that trust matters to organizations (i.e., consequences) before turning to the question of how trust can be built and 'managed' (i.e., antecedents). Two other themes that emerged from our analyses pertain to the content of the variables involved. First, of all the types of antecedents distinguished in Fulmer and Gelfand's (2012) literature review, individual-level characteristics of trustors and trustees (e.g., attitudes, behaviors, emotions and predispositions) are most often recommended for examination by scholars, with an emphasis on trustor attitudes and trustee behaviors. Although recommendations were made about examining other types of antecedents (e.g., shared characteristics, communication processes, structural characteristics, and organizational characteristics), these were substantially fewer in number. Second, among the consequences distinguished by Fulmer and Gelfand, scholars overwhelmingly agree on performance as the most critical consequence that should be examined in relation to trust in the future. Indeed, this is not surprising, since research on the performance implications of trust continues to suffer from mixed findings, and there is thus a pressing need to resolve this issue. While our count data also indicated reasonable scholarly recognition of the need for studying communication, cooperation and conflict behaviors, they show considerably less recognition for studying the other types of consequences identified by Fulmer and Gelfand, i.e., attitudes and preferences, knowledge sharing and organizational learning, and viability.

Besides the two clear trends of studying individual-level characteristics as antecedents and performance (both at the individual and the aggregate level) as a consequence of trust, we observe a remarkable breadth in the variables recommended by scholars in relation to trust. Taken together, these recommendations collectively suggest that many scholars expect trust to be relevant in relation to a wealth of organizational antecedents and consequences, and that more research is needed to further explore and expand the nomological network of trust.

Our findings further highlight the need for more research into the dynamics of trust. For example, our analysis shows scholarly recognition for the need to study specific phases of trust, including trust building, trust stability/maintenance, and trust recovery after a violation (Rousseau et al., 1998). In addition to dynamics in the *degree* of trust, other (albeit considerably fewer) recommendations indicate the need to examine the dynamic *diffusion* of trust across parties, including the phenomenon of trust 'trickling down' from higher to lower organizational levels, social contagion of trust among parties, and the emergence of shared perceptions of trust among members of an organizational group. In addition, a few recommendations were made to study other trust dynamics, such as how the substantive meaning of trust changes over time and how trust co-evolves at different levels of analysis. Together, these recommendations clearly indicate the need to move beyond static approaches to trust and to conduct more research into the dynamics of organizational trust.

Emerging Themes across "Why" and "Who/Where/When" Recommendations

The overwhelming scholarly recognition of the need to understand the nature of trust and its relationships with antecedents and consequences stands in stark contrast to scholarly acknowledgment of the need to understand the causal mechanisms through which trust operates and is affected (i.e., why) and boundary assumptions underlying these relationships (i.e., who/where/when). The count data show that most of the recommendations made about mediating mechanisms focused on mechanisms operating at the individual level, with an emphasis on attitudinal and behavioral as opposed to cognitive or affective mechanisms. While the majority of scholars recommend a single theoretical base for understanding how trust operates and is impacted by other variables, scholars seem to disagree about what theoretical base should be used. This is reflected by the fact that scholars recommend as many as twenty-one different theories (e.g., social identity theory, power dependence theory, social exchange theory). On the one hand, this variety demonstrates the theoretical richness of the field; on the other hand, it shows that little theoretical pruning or integration has taken place so far (Leavitt, Mitchell, & Peterson, 2010; Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011). Indeed, our count data indicate that few scholars advocate integrating theories as a way to enhance our understanding of trust.

Our findings further show that scholars commonly agree that more research is needed that analyzes the generalizability (or, conversely, the context-specificity) of current insights on trust. Classifying these recommendations using Whetten et al.'s (2009) framework reveals an emphasis on examining contextual boundaries over examining level-of-analysis boundaries. Within the recommendations about contextual boundaries, there is a clear emphasis on the need to assess the generalizability across parties and locations (i.e., who and where) over the generalizability across temporal phases (i.e., when) (Whetten, 1989). Besides assessing the generalizability of *current* insights on trust post hoc, a small portion of scholars also advocate incorporating boundary assumptions a priori into *future* theories by building context- and level-specific models of trust. Together, the why and who/where/when recommendations point towards an emerging scholarly recognition for the need for a more fine-grained understanding of the relationships between trust and its antecedents and consequences.

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD

Having examined scholarly recommendations up until 2011 allowed us to assess how organizational trust research has developed since then. We address this issue by reviewing recent findings in 111 recent articles published in 31 top-tier management journals (e.g., *Journal of Management*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*) that were either published or in press between 2012 and the time of writing this chapter (i.e., March 2015). Overall, it is clear that many calls for future research have been vigorously followed up on; however, we also identify a number of issues that were suggested by earlier studies but that have not yet been fully addressed, as well as various new topics that were not entirely anticipated by earlier research suggestions. We discuss these developments in more detail below, organizing them along the aggregate dimensions that emerged from our content analysis of scholarly recommendations (see Figure 1).

“What” Developments

Based on our review of the recent literature, there appears to be an increasing consensus on the nature and conceptualization of trust. Recent work has almost exclusively built on either Mayer et al.’s (1995) or Rousseau et al.’s (1998) definition of trust. While scholarly agreement on the general definition is encouraging, we observe an growing disagreement about the central underlying dimensions of trust, with some studies distinguishing between ability-, benevolence-, and integrity-based trust (Zapata, Olsen, & Martins, 2013) and others differentiating between dispositional, categorization- and rule-based trust (Muethel & Bond, 2013); between calculative and relational trust (Poppo, Zhou, & Li, forthcoming); or between rule-, role-, and identification-based trust (van der Werff & Buckley, forthcoming). While these research efforts have added nuance and richness to the understanding of trust dimensions, little progress has been made in exploring how different typologies may map onto each other or how some of the dimensions may be complements or substitutes for one another.

A related discussion that has received much attention (probably more than anticipated by most scholars) regards the relationship between trust and distrust. An increasing number of studies have treated distrust as a separate construct (Bijlsma-Frankema, Sitkin, & Weibel, in press) and theorized on its role above and beyond that of trust (Connelly, Miller, & Devers, 2012; Lumineau, forthcoming).

With respect to levels and referents of trust (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012), significant contributions to our understanding of trust continue to be made at the individual, team, and organizational level, and there is an increasing accumulation of insights at each respective level (Cao & Lumineau, 2015; De Jong et al., forthcoming; Zhong, Su, Peng, & Yang, in press). In contrast, however, very little progress is being made in terms of cross-level research on trust.

One exception is the study by Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey (2013), who examined the impact of intrateam trust on both team- and individual-level performance. The continued lack of scholarly attention to cross-level effects is surprising, given that trust itself is a multi-level phenomenon (Currall & Inkpen, 2002) and that we know that antecedents and consequences exist across different levels of analysis (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). We believe cross-level investigations have great potential to advance our understanding of organizational trust, and we therefore look forward to more research in this area.

We have further witnessed a burgeoning interest in bi-lateral/multi-lateral extensions of trust, mostly in micro-level investigations. Korsgaard, Brower, and Lester (Korsgaard, Brower, & Lester, 2015), for instance, provide a review of dyadic-level extensions of trust, distinguishing between mutual, reciprocal, and asymmetric trust. Among the different extensions of trust, trust asymmetry and felt trust have probably received the most attention in recent studies (Carter & Mossholder, in press; De Jong & Dirks, 2012; Lau, Lam, & Wen, 2014). Unfortunately, these developments have not yet diffused to macro-level studies of trust, which continue to focus exclusively on the trust experienced by only one of the parties in the relationship and to implicitly assume that trust is mutual and symmetric.

One extension that has frequently been suggested but has received little recent attention is third-party trust—that is, the issue of whether trust is transferred from a better-known third party to a closely associated, but less well-known, entity. Given the prevalence of situations in which a trustor has had no prior interactions with a trustee but is familiar with certain other actors in that trustee's immediate network, the factors promoting and hindering third-party trust transfer clearly deserve greater attention. Another extension that has seen several calls for more research but has not been followed up on recently is trust (in)accuracy. While an exact match between a trustor's trust and a trustee's trustworthiness is rare, we know very little about the antecedents and consequences of mismatches—that is, over- and under-trust (Priem & Nystrom, 2014). We therefore recommend further research into how trust accuracy emerges and operates in organizational settings.

"How" Developments

While earlier "how" recommendations primarily emphasized studying consequences of trust, recent studies have given essentially equal attention to studying antecedents to trust. Recognizing that trust can stem from a variety of factors, researchers have started to integrate and juxtapose different types of antecedents, comparing their relative effects and joint impact on trust (Schilke & Cook, 2015; Zhong et al., in press). Among the types of antecedents studied, extra-organizational characteristics have received increased attention (Ribbink & Grimm, 2014; Roy, 2012). In addition, we have seen an exploding number of studies looking at contractual governance as an antecedent to trust (Cao & Lumineau, 2015; Connelly et al., 2012). Moreover, researchers have identified a variety of previously largely unexplored antecedents, such as status (Lount & Pettit, 2012), cultural metacognition (Chua, Morris, & Mor, 2012), language barriers (Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014), social comparison (Dunn, Ruedy, & Schweitzer, 2012), organizational transparency (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, forthcoming), and organizational culture (Schilke & Cook, 2015), among others. Together, these developments have contributed to further expanding the nomological network surrounding trust as well as to a more balanced examination of antecedents and consequences.

Among the consequences suggested by scholars, performance has by far received the most attention recently (De Jong, Bijlsma-Frankema, & Cardinal, 2014; Kong et al., 2014), in line with prior recommendations. While this growing interest in the bottom-line consequences of trust is laudable, recent studies have reported mixed results regarding the trust-performance relationship, with some studies showing trust to be positively associated with performance (Drescher, Korsgaard, Welpe, Picot, & Wigand, 2014; Ferguson & Peterson, forthcoming) but others reporting a non-significant relationship between the two (Braun et al., 2013; Chung & Jackson, 2013). Clearly, a systematic integration of these inconsistent findings regarding the performance consequences of trust is warranted (De Jong et al., forthcoming). After all, the assumption of trust leading to beneficial individual and collective outcomes is at the core of much organizational trust research, making additional empirical insight into this issue a priority.

Although there has been a proliferation of research focusing on the functional outcomes of trust, a modest but growing recognition of the dark side of trust has developed as well (Bammens & Collewaert, 2014). Lumineau (forthcoming), for instance, provides a comprehensive overview of some of the dysfunctional consequences of trust, and develops propositions regarding how contractual provisions may enhance or diminish such negative trust outcomes. Other studies have started to elucidate the mechanisms responsible for negative effects of trust (Baer et al., forthcoming; Kong et al., 2014). As research focusing on the limits and liabilities of trust is still in its infancy, there is great potential for meaningful contributions in this area.

We furthermore see significant advancements being made in exploring trust-level dynamics. Recent research has started to examine how initial trust affects trust at subsequent stages of a relationship (Ferguson & Peterson, forthcoming; Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2013) and to differentiate between antecedents to trust that are relevant at different developmental stages (Lander & Kooning, 2013; van der Werff & Buckley, forthcoming). In line with scholarly recommendations, the developmental stage that has received the most attention recently is trust recovery following a breach of trust. Recent studies have, for instance, explored the types of breach, how transgressors address a breach (Harmon, Kim, & Mayer, forthcoming), the impact of whether the betrayed party is an individual or a group (Kim, Cooper, Dirks, & Ferrin, 2013), and how trustors cognitively process a breach (Schilke et al., 2013). A developmental phase that has recently sparked an unanticipated amount of attention is initial or "swift" trust. This research is particularly focused on the question of how one can explain trust perceptions without prior interactions and how such initial perceptions can have long-lasting effects on the relationship (Holtz, forthcoming; Wildman et al., 2012).

Relative to research into trust *level* dynamics, we have seen relatively little progress in understanding other trust dynamics, such as how the *nature and meaning* of trust may change over time. A notable exception is a study by Schilke and Cook (2013), who develop a multi-stage, cross-level process theory of trust development, in which the meaning of trust changes as it transforms from interpersonal to interorganizational trust. Future research may use other approaches to conceptualizing qualitative changes in the meaning of trust that might occur over time (for example, by employing one of the trust dimension typologies discussed earlier).

"Why" Developments

Compared to the limited number of scholarly recommendations on the "why" dimension, the number of studies considering mediating mechanisms has exploded in recent years. Scholars have examined a wide range of attitudinal (Lount & Pettit, 2012), cognitive (Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo, Zaphata, & Rich, 2012), emotional (Dunn et al., 2012), and behavioral mechanisms (De Jong et al., 2014). In addition to an increased interest in examining mediating mechanisms in a general sense, we also witness more and more efforts to purposefully use a single theoretical base as the foundation for developing an integrative model of trust and explicitly testing the multiple mediating mechanisms specified by these theories. Kong et al. (2014), for instance, use social exchange theory to develop and test an integrative model of how trust affects negotiation outcomes, while Baer et al. (in press) draw on conservation of resources theory to test an integrative model of how felt trust affects individual performance. This trend signals an increasing sophistication and theoretical precision in the scholarly understanding of how trust operates in relation to antecedents and consequences.

Another indicator of theoretical progress in recent research is a trend of combining and integrating multiple theories. Most notably, many investigations have combined social exchange theory with complementary theoretical approaches, including attribution theory (De Jong & Dirks, 2012), self-determination theory (Aryee, Walumbwa, Mondejar, & Chu, 2015), social identity theory (Schaubroeck, Peng, & Hannah, 2013), and social resources theory (Reiche, 2012). Additionally, we have witnessed an increasing number of cross-disciplinary investigations that combine social-psychological and economic approaches to understand how antecedent factors affect trust (Schilke & Cook, 2015; Zhong et al., in press). Together, these studies signal a growing scholarly recognition of the value of integrating and reconciling diverse theories regarding trust.

“Who/Where/When” Developments

Along with the surge of interest in mediating mechanisms, researchers have become increasingly interested in contingency factors. Among the contingencies studied are various individual characteristics (Brown, Crossley, & Robinson, 2014), shared characteristics (Ertug, Cuypers, Noorderhaven, & Bensaou, 2013), and organizational characteristics (Crossley, Cooper, & Wernsing, 2013). Other studies have picked up on scholarly recommendations to develop more context-specific models of trust by examining trust among particular parties (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, forthcoming), at particular locations (Chen, Eberly, Chiang, & Cheng, 2014), and in particular types of relationships (Mortensen & Neeley, 2012). While research in specific organizational contexts can provide deep insight into the way trust operates within particular contexts, it does not address the issue of whether and how insights on trust generalize across level of analyses (Whetten et al., 2009). This is an important issue that future research should address.

DISCUSSION

Where Do We Go From Here?

In this chapter, we first synthesized scholarly recommendations for future research across social science disciplines, resulting in an emergent framework that organizes these research directions into a parsimonious set of theoretical building blocks (i.e., *What*, *How*, *Why*, *Who/where/when*). Applying this framework to more recent management research on trust revealed insights into current trends in the field as well as understudied directions, such as the integration of trust typologies, conceptual extensions at the macro level, trust and performance, cross-level examinations, and generalizability across contexts and levels of analysis. Our ambition with this synthesis and review has been to build a common research agenda by capturing the trust community's beliefs about how to move forward, which we view as much more critical for advancing the field than personal opinions, including our own. We therefore resist the temptation of providing our opinions on *which* directions to pursue, but instead offer our suggestions on *how* scholars can build on the recommendations and developments we identified to move the field forward. In doing so, we differentiate between the role of individual researchers and the organizational trust community as a whole.

Just as the recommendations and developments we analyzed oftentimes comprised of multiple categories, so can individual researchers use the substantive categories (i.e., theoretical building blocks, second-order themes) we identified to think more systematically about the contribution of their envisioned study. While we framed these categories as discrete, some are interrelated such that one naturally implies the other. Consequently, one possibility for researchers is to pursue a substantive research direction that allows them to contribute to multiple theoretical building blocks at the same time, thereby enhancing the scope of their contribution. For instance, examining the temporal generalizability of insights on trust (i.e., *When*) implies the need to conduct longitudinal research into trust dynamics (i.e., *How*). The same principle applies at the level of the second-order themes in our framework. For example, bi-lateral and multi-lateral extensions of trust require trust to be conceptualized and operationalized at aggregate levels of analysis. On the other hand, some of the categories that comprise our framework co-exist independently of one another. As such, a fruitful strategy for increasing the scope and novelty of one's potential contribution is to combine categories in (meaningful) ways that have not been done before. For instance, examining mediating mechanisms of conceptual extensions of trust at the macro-level allows scholars to contribute insights into the *Why's* of understudied manifestations of trust (i.e., *What*). Likewise, studying hybrid forms of trust at transition points during changes in the meaning of trust over time enables them to contribute novel insights into the understudied topic of trust dynamics and contribute to both the aggregate dimensions of *What* and *How*.

We also see two roles for the trust community as a whole in moving the field forward, based on the two sources of fragmentation we identified in our introduction. The first source is organizational research that includes trust but does not treat it as a core variable of interest. This research is likely to yield incremental insights on trust at best while also contributing to increased fragmentation and divergence of the field. We believe therefore it is critical for the trust community to counterbalance these trends by keeping track of knowledge accumulation and integration across primary studies (e.g., through narrative and meta-analytic syntheses), and by tackling substantive issues surrounding trust that are characterized by a lack of integration (e.g., the persistence of multiple trust typologies, a lack of research into the generalizability of insights across contexts and levels of analysis). The second source we identified was the existence and persistence of sub-communities of trust scholars (e.g., the inter-organizational and intra-organizational trust communities, the qualitative and quantitative trust community). We therefore believe it is critical for scholars from these different sub-communities to more actively exchange ideas, learn from each other, and test whether theories and insights from one domain can be meaningfully transferred to another. These efforts would not only potentially increase knowledge transfer across sub-communities, but also facilitate the development of common terminology, concepts, and theoretical frameworks, which would no doubt benefit the field as a whole.

Conclusion

By synthesizing scholarly recommendations and reviewing recent developments, this chapter offers systematic insight into the future of organizational trust research. In doing so, we hope not only to guide individual researchers in finding an interesting topic for their future projects, but also to help the field of organizational trust research to develop in a more coherent and cumulative manner. Given that trust is linked to such a plethora of organizationally relevant variables and issues, we are convinced that by advancing the understanding of organizational trust, researchers are able to make important and meaningful contributions to the broader organization science literature. This potential, we believe, can only be realized through working together as a community. We hope this chapter will inspire trust researchers to do so.

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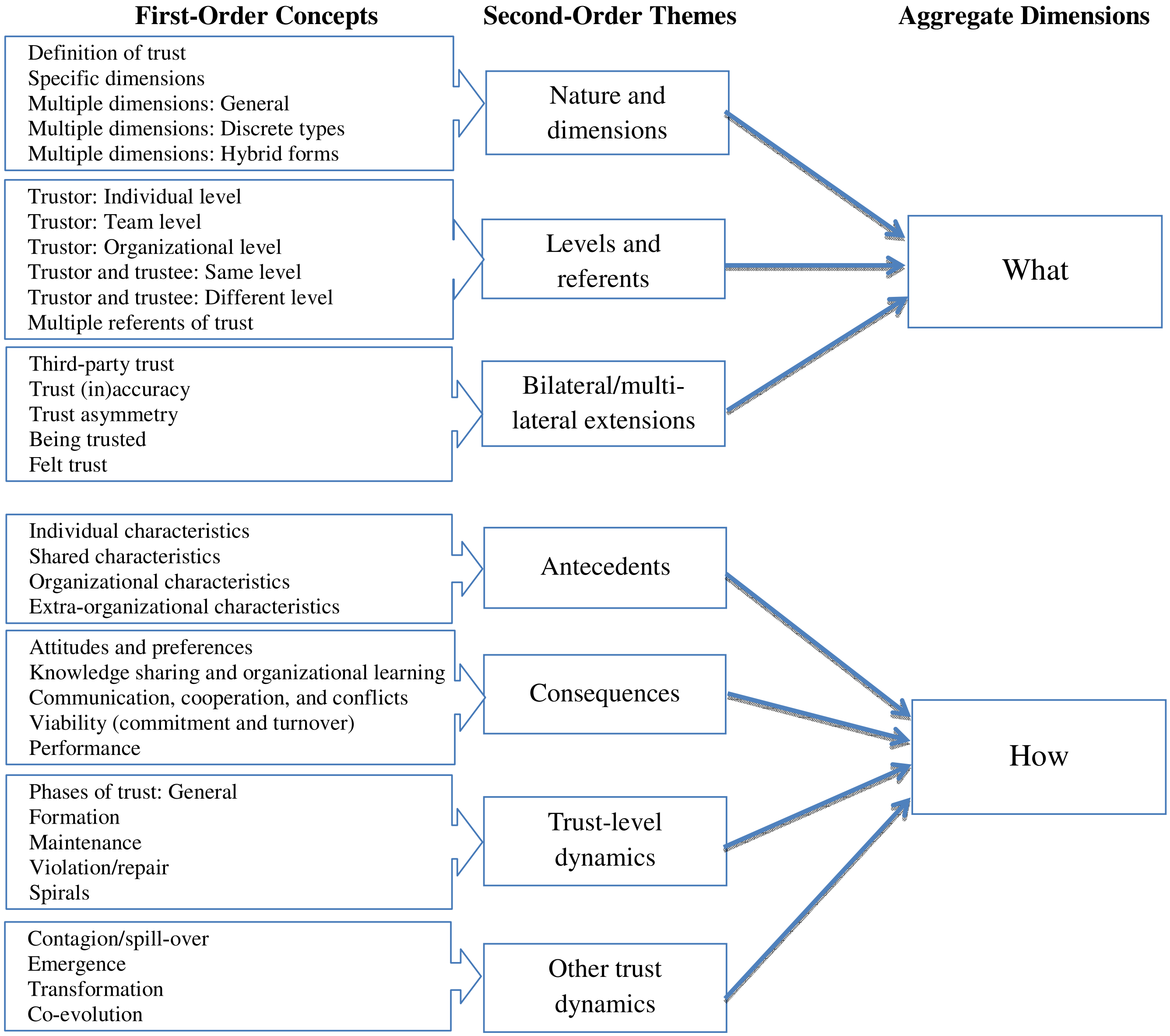
Table 1
Illustrative Evidence

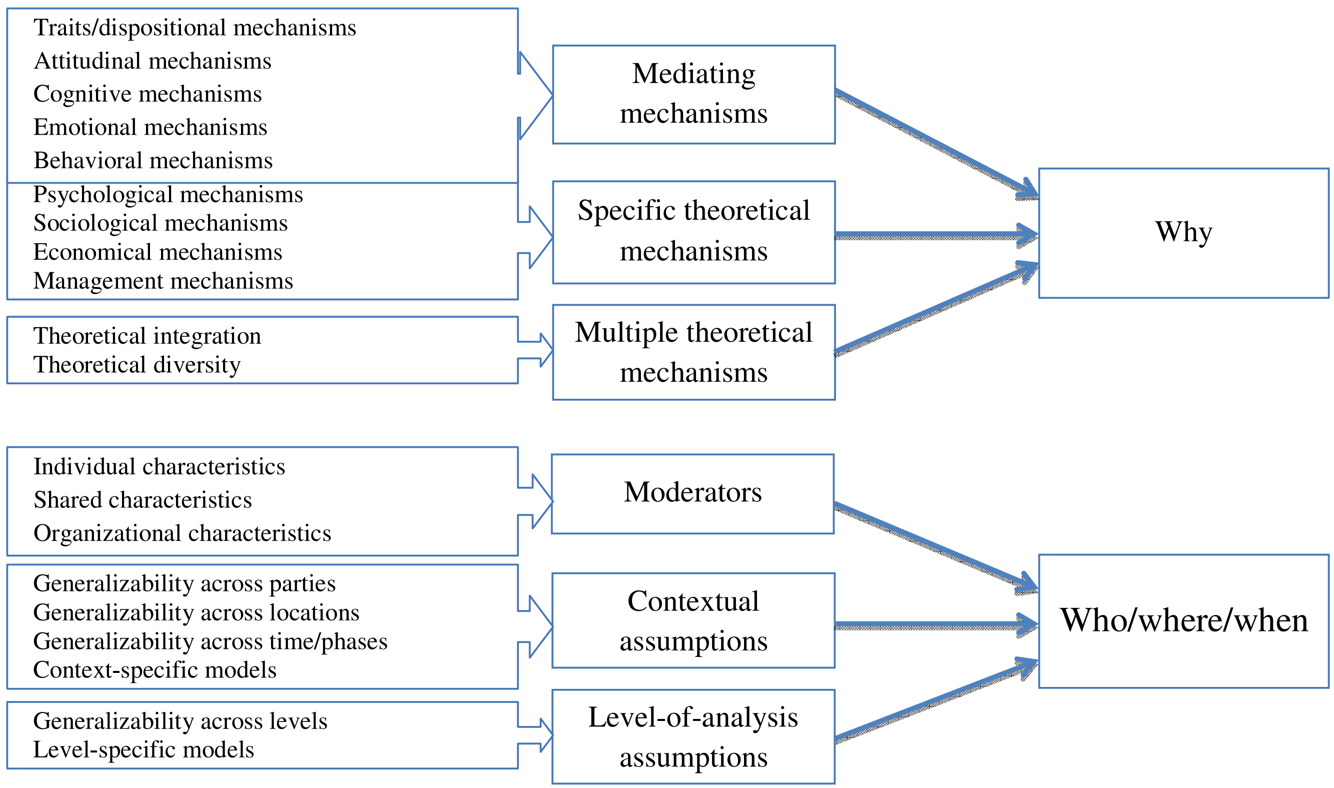
Second-Order Concepts	Illustrative Statements	Number of Recommendations
'What'		
Nature and dimensions	"We think that by understanding this common 'architectural structure' of the trust construct a better dialogue could be developed between researchers." (Castaldo et al., 2010: 666) [*definition of trust*] "Future research should also capitalize on our current set of findings to further explore how the two types of trust relate to other organizational variables." (Chua et al., 2008: 448) [*specific dimensions*]	**99**
Levels and referents	"Further research should also examine other ways of fostering the development of managerial trust. Certain management practices or reward systems may enhance the development of managerial trust in an NPD team." (Dayan et al., 2009: 33) [*trustor and trustee: different level*] "Future studies of the mediating role of trust in PJ-outcome relationships should consider multiple justice foci as well as multiple trust foci within a single study." (Yang et al., 2009: 152) [*multiple referents*]	**337**
Bilateral/multi-lateral extensions	"Of course, this line of inquiry itself may raise new issues in terms of the degree to which each negotiator trusts the third party (and how much the third party trusts each negotiator, and so on)." (Tomlinson et al., 2009: 182) [*third-party trust*] "Clearly, additional empirical research is needed to fully understand how being trusted by management influences customer service." (Salamon & Robinson, 2008: 599) [*being trusted*]	**26**
'How'		
Antecedents	"Given the robust findings for leadership style on trust, future research would also benefit from continuing this line of inquiry and exploring other managerial characteristics. One can imagine that a particularly agreeable or extraverted manager may be especially adept at fostering trust among subordinates." (Holtz & Harold, 2008: 797) [*individual characteristics*] "Future research could investigate whether and how national stereotypes impact on institutional trust." (Maguire & Phillips, 2008: 395) [*extra-organizational characteristics*]	**42**

Consequences	"Future research should extend this line of inquiry by examining other work-related outcomes, such as turnover intentions." (Yang & Mossholder, 2010: 60) [*viability (commitment and turnover)*] "How the level of organizational trust impacts performance is a very interesting path for future research." (Mach et al., 2010: 789) [*performance*]	**72**
Trust-level dynamics	"A theme that warrants further attention is the impact of intra-organizational conflicts and inter-organizational coalitions on the establishment and maintenance of inter-organizational trust." (MacDuffie, 2011: 38) [*maintenance*] "Finally, another interesting avenue for future research on restoration processes in exchange relations is to investigate what level of overcompensation is most effective in restoring trust." (Desmet et al., 2011: 85) [*violation/repair*]	**87**
Other trust dynamics	"It has been argued that a trust relationship at early stages may be more cognitively-based, whereas at latter stages it may become more affectively-based. Questions such as how it evolves from a cognitive to an affective base have not as yet been examined. Therefore, research addressing this issue would prove to be fruitful." (Yang & Mossholder, 2010: 60) [*transformation*] "A key research area is the co-evolution of trust and alliances." (Nielsen, 2011: 171) [*co-evolution*]	**13**
	'Why'	
Mediating mechanisms	"In this manner, it is expected that joint-behavioral outcomes will mediate the relationship between trust congruence and actual joint gain." (Tomlinson et al., 2009: 182) [*behavioral mechanisms*] "For example, it may be the case that collective felt trust affects customer service through affective variables, such as positive mood. Clearly, additional empirical research is needed to fully understand how being trusted by management influences customer service." (Salamon & Robinson, 2008: 599) [*emotional mechanisms*]	**40**
Specific theoretical mechanisms	"These clearly merit future research and further theoretical development through Social Identity Theory." (Lowry et al., 2010: 311) [*psychological mechanisms*] "Future research may serve to enhance the literature on coworker trust by using team member exchange (TMX) theory." (Lau & Liden, 2008: 1136) [*sociological mechanisms*]	**22**
Multiple theoretical mechanisms	"We note that while different theoretical perspectives have been brought to bear on various referents at this level, there are opportunities for cross-fertilization." (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012: 1203) [*theoretical integration*] "Our review revealed great theoretical diversity across levels, which can be considered a strength	**8**

	that contributes to our understanding of trust in organizations and should continue to be leveraged in future research." (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012: 1206) [*theoretical diversity*]	
	'Who/Where/When'	
Moderators	"It is interesting that informational justice of the band director had no effect on trustworthiness perceptions while informational justice as it pertained to the section leaders did influence trustworthiness perceptions, which we discuss next. Future research could address this issue by examining the extent to which organizational hierarchy may influence this relationship." (Frazier et al., 2010: 65) [*organizational characteristics*] "Another interesting research direction is to examine whether task interdependency moderates the shared work values-trust-effectiveness relationship. As task interdependency increases, shared work values might have stronger effects on trust and team member effectiveness." (Chou et al., 2008: 1733) [*shared characteristics*]	**55**
Contextual assumptions	"Future research might attempt to test the ideas developed in this study across different settings." (Madjar & Ortiz-Walters, 2008: 962) [*generalizability across locations*] "Future research could investigate whether and how national stereotypes impact on institutional trust in cross-border mergers." (Maguire & Phillips, 2008: 395) [*context-specific models*]	**117**
Level of analysis assumptions	"Another intriguing avenue for future research is to examine our assertion that the assumptions and recommendations for interpersonal trust repair are not readily transferable to other levels." (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009: 142) [*generalizability across levels*] "More research is needed to confirm these quasi-isomorphic patterns, as few studies have examined the role of networks in trust processes at the team level and within an organization at the organizational level." (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012: 1207) [*level-specific models*]	**16**

Figure 1
Structure of the Data and Emergent Organizing Framework




Traits/dispositional mechanisms
Attitudinal mechanisms
Cognitive mechanisms
Emotional mechanisms
Behavioral mechanisms
Mediating mechanisms
Psychological mechanisms
Sociological mechanisms
Economical mechanisms
Management mechanisms
Specific theoretical mechanisms
Theoretical integration
Theoretical diversity
Multiple theoretical mechanisms
Why
Individual characteristics
Shared characteristics
Organizational characteristics
Moderators
Generalizability across parties
Generalizability across locations
Generalizability across time/phases
Context-specific models
Contextual assumptions
Generalizability across levels
Level-specific models
Level-of-analysis assumptions
Who/where/when